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President: Mr. GANEV (Bulgaria)

- Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations: report of the Secretary-General (continued) [37]

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Programme of work

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The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 37 (continued)

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/595)

Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand): It is a great pleasure and an honour for me to speak, on behalf of the Thai delegation, on this important agenda item.

At the outset, I should like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his inspiring statement and for the comprehensive report he has prepared for us. I should also like to applaud Mr. Jan Eliasson, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his untiring efforts and unmatched conviction, manifested during the past seven months, in strengthening the United Nations role in the humanitarian field.

Conflict situations in various parts of the world today have posed a new challenge for the international community. While innocent lives are caught in ethnic or civic strife, we, the members of the international community, can no longer remain bystanders. Humanitarian assistance has become our common responsibility - our responsibility to act together to help our fellow human beings in desperate need.

The fundamental principles reflected in General Assembly resolution 46/182 manifest our consensus on entrusting the United Nations with the responsibility of responding to humanitarian emergency situations. My delegation therefore agrees with the notion, as put forward in the Secretary-General's report (A/47/595), that humanitarian assistance is one of the principal responsibilities of the United Nations. It is a responsibility closely linked to those of peace-keeping, peacemaking, rehabilitation and development. Despite the urgent need to respond, humanitarian assistance is

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

only a part of our long-term goal to achieve world peace, security and prosperity.

Thailand welcomes all efforts of the United Nations in its new approach to humanitarian diplomacy. We are gratified to see that in confronting pressing political conflict situations the United Nations has carried out its responsibility in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Therefore, in any discussion relating to the question of access to the "population in need" (A/47/595, para. 4), it is necessary also to keep in focus the need to observe full respect for the sovereignty of States.

Let me now turn to the content of the Secretary-General's report, which provides a general overview of, and developments in, the strengthening of the United Nations role in the humanitarian field. In this connection my delegation would like to make the following comments.*

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* Mr. Moumin (Comoros), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

We are gratified to see that the four new United Nations instruments for humanitarian assistance have been used in an effective and coordinated manner in responding to crises. These instruments include the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Consolidated Appeal.

We greatly appreciate the review of emergency responses activities. In this connection we applaud the efforts of the United Nations in addressing the emergencies in the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, along the Bangladesh and Myanmar border, Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia and other parts of the world.

With regard to the concern over the mobilization of resources for humanitarian activities, my delegation is encouraged by the close coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions.

We welcome the close coordination between the non-governmental organizations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in order to ensure an effective and coherent response to emergency situations. We therefore support the establishment of non-governmental-organization consortium so that smaller non-governmental organizations can pool resources to work as implementing partners of the United Nations.

We also support the role of the Resident Coordinator as the representative of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs at the country level, particularly in coordinating the United Nations response to natural disasters. We believe that this will serve as the basis for the transition from humanitarian assistance to rehabilitation and development.

We welcome the increased involvement of the Security Council as the "new feature" in the humanitarian activities of the United Nations.

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

Facing the increase in both man-made and natural disasters, we have no alternative but to place the humanitarian imperative at the top of the international agenda. Present reality demands our full cooperation with the United Nations in its efforts to fulfil its renewed responsibility. The success in strengthening the United Nations humanitarian role is a clear signal of our genuine commitment to humanitarian assistance, a universal shared value of humanity.

Mr. KÄÄRIÄ (Finland): I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries - Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

At the outset I wish to express our thanks to the Secretary-General for his report under this agenda item and to the Under-Secretary-General for his statements in the Second and Third Committees.

The coordination of the United Nations humanitarian efforts was one of the key issues dealt with by the General Assembly last year. The Nordic countries welcomed resolution 46/182 on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and the establishment of the Department for Humanitarian Assistance and the post of the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator. We fully support the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to implement last year's resolution.

The mandate given to the Emergency Relief Coordinator is demanding. The expectations of the member countries regarding the role of the Coordinator also in politically complex emergency situations are reflected in the aforementioned resolution. We see humanitarian diplomacy as an expression of the search for new instruments to deal with relief needs, and in particular to

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

safeguard the delivery of humanitarian assistance in cases where the emergency situation is closely interwoven with civil strife.

The response of the international community to humanitarian needs in complex political situations is an element in the broader context of the Secretary-General's agenda for peace. Humanitarian assistance itself involves a continuum from relief through rehabilitation to development, and thus paves the way for peace and stability.

The time that has passed since the establishment of the new United Nations coordination mechanism is too short for a thorough assessment of the functioning of the new structures. Within its overall operational framework laid down in resolution 46/182, the Department of Humanitarian Assistance has been confronted with a dramatic increase in emergency situations. The experience of the United Nations emergency and relief operations so far have proven that there is a need to further improve the efficiency of the system. The primary objective must be to ensure the clarity of roles and the division of labour between the agencies involved. It is also important that the different organizations can respond to changing needs.

Clearer division of responsibilities would make it easier to identify the appropriate coordination structure in various emergency operations. Matters of procedure or disputes among the different organizations regarding their responsibilities must not be allowed to delay the United Nations response. These issues must be further discussed and solved in the appropriate inter-agency and intergovernmental forums. Effectiveness can be achieved only if the agreed principles are accepted and applied by all parts of the system. It is essential that the member countries coordinate their own policies in the various governing bodies to that effect.

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

The Nordic countries take note of the review on the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the field, which is mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, and we are looking forward to further discussion on this matter. We all agree that the success or failure of United Nations assistance is to be measured in the field. When the specific objectives in each emergency are agreed upon by all agencies involved, and when the need to cooperate with others is clearly recognized, the activities stand a better chance of being successful.

Field coordination is closely linked with the response and coordination capacity of the affected countries themselves. Their role is crucial in any relief operation. For that reason we must emphasize the importance of their willingness and capacity to cooperate with all the actors involved. In this context the Nordic countries would like to underline the importance of strengthening the prevention and preparedness capacity of the Member States, which requires that all members of the international community work together to achieve this goal in order to alleviate the consequences of emergency situations and to contribute to building peace.

The Nordic countries are of the opinion that the financing of the Department of Humanitarian Assistance must come from the regular budget of the United Nations in order to ensure a stable base for the core activities of the Department. Against this background, we welcome the budget outline for 1994-1995, in which the Secretary-General proposes significant increases in resources to humanitarian affairs, among other activities.

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

It is crucial to ensure that both human and financial resources are used in the most efficient way. Another crucial issue is the effective and full integration of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) into the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The functions, including the division of responsibilities between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs office at New York and its office at Geneva, must be further clarified. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs at New York should concentrate on overall coordination, including the necessary political and policy coordination, whereas the Geneva office should be responsible for the operational aspects of coordination.

It is essential to ensure that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund fulfils its functions as a cash-flow mechanism for rapid and coordinated response by the United Nations. We would welcome concrete proposals to that effect in the review of the operation of the Fund. We look forward to the discussion of that review.

In emergencies requiring a coordinated response, consolidated appeals have been prepared. We should like to express our appreciation of the utilization of this important instrument for coordination. In a situation where emergencies and humanitarian needs have multiplied and are competing for funds, increasingly rapid preparation of consolidated appeals and follow-up reporting would further enhance the donors' response.

The Nordic countries are very concerned about the security of international relief personnel. The responsibility for guaranteeing safe working conditions in emergency operations must be shared by all United Nations Member States. It is crucial that all parties concerned respect and ensure the safety of the personnel in complex emergency situations.

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

The ability of the international community to respond to complex humanitarian emergencies has never been more severely tested than in recent months. It is therefore important that the question of emergency coordination be kept high on the agenda of the United Nations with a view to developing a truly effective partnership between the Member States, United Nations organizations and relevant organizations outside the United Nations system.

Important changes concerning the coordination of United Nations emergency assistance are still needed. The most urgent are a strengthening of the coordination of the United Nations at field level, a clear division of labour and responsibilities between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs office at New York and its office at Geneva, and an urgent increase in resources for humanitarian affairs.

The Nordic countries look forward to the continuation at the forthcoming regular session of the Economic and Social Council of the discussion on United Nations emergency coordination and its follow-up at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. HASSAN (Sudan): The international community has become deeply concerned at the disasters that have struck different parts of the world. One of the primary responsibilities of the United Nations is to provide humanitarian assistance to those threatened by natural and man-made disasters. To face these disasters positively, two conditions must be met: well-established coordination within the United Nations system as well as with Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and provision of sufficient and readily available resources. In fact, the appointment of Mr. Jan Eliasson to the post of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs was an excellent choice. Taking into consideration

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

Mr. Eliasson's vast experience and skills in the diplomatic field, we are confident that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will do an excellent job under his guidance. We should like to reiterate here Sudan's full support for Mr. Eliasson and his Department and to assure them of our cooperation.

We believe that humanitarian assistance in emergencies is primarily the responsibility of the Government of the country affected. The United Nations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should intervene only in response to a request from the affected country. This principle is clearly incorporated in General Assembly resolutions 45/100 and 46/182. If it is applied, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the affected country and the principles of the Charter are respected. Humanitarian assistance should never, in any case, be used as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of a country, and it should be rendered in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

In this regard, I should like to refer to the very relevant remarks which Mr. Sommaruga, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, made at this morning's meeting of the Assembly and which, in our view, deserve serious and careful consideration.

The main goal of humanitarian assistance is to save lives and alleviate the suffering of all the people affected. We should separate humanitarian assistance from political endeavours so that the former can be pursued regardless of the success or failure of the latter. In order to strengthen the coordination of the humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, we have to concentrate on the humanitarian aspect and drop politicization from this context. It is our conviction that this is the basis for success by the United Nations in this endeavour. If we do not drop

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

politicization from this context, we may not ensure the full coordination of the parties concerned and sufficient provision of resources for the whole operation.

Access to the needy people, when dealing with an emergency, is a sensitive issue, especially when two or more factions are fighting. This issue is sometimes seen as contradictory to the obligation of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as laid down in the Charter. In 1988 the Government of the Sudan appealed to the international community, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to support its efforts and provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate the plight of thousands of people whose lives were threatened. Through the efforts of the Secretary-General, the United Nations system and the international community, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) came into being. OLS set a historic precedent in 1989, when the Government of the Sudan and the so-called Sudan People's Liberation Army agreed that the delivery of humanitarian assistance to war-affected civilians, wherever they might be, should transcend both military and political considerations. Through agreed corridors of tranquillity, relief supplies were to be permitted to move freely in the conflict zone under the United Nations flag, and access for relief flights to a large number of rural centres was also approved.

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

But the so-called Sudan People's Liberation Army did not honour its commitment and began hindering the relief supplies to the areas affected by shooting down the relief planes and even by killing the relief workers. Very recently the Secretary-General condemned the so-called Sudan People's Liberation Army and held it accountable for killing four United Nations relief workers after kidnapping them.

It is worth mentioning here that Mr. Jan Eliasson, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, visited Sudan during the period 13 to 16 September 1992 to review the humanitarian operations in the country. During his trip Mr. Eliasson met and held discussions with high-level Government officials and representatives of the diplomatic community as well as representatives of national and international non-governmental organizations. While in Sudan Mr. Eliasson visited the squatters' resettlement areas and camps for the displaced in Greater Khartoum, and he undertook a mission to Juba, where the United Nations relief flights were resumed. Mr. Eliasson was received by His Excellency Lt. General Omer Hassan Ahmed El Bashir, President of the Revolutionary Command Council. In his meeting with the President, Mr. Eliasson expressed the appreciation of the United Nations for the continuing support of the Government and people of Sudan in providing asylum to hundreds of thousands of refugees over the past three decades. The visit of Mr. Eliasson to Sudan was crowned by the signature of an agreement containing the following points:

One, the Government of Sudan and the United Nations reviewed the plan of Operation Life Line Sudan and agreed that effective mechanisms should be devised to provide prompt and effective humanitarian assistance, taking into account developments that would provide greater means of implementation and the possibility of increased utilization of food from national production.

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

Two, the Government of Sudan and the United Nations reconfirmed the responsibility of the Government in providing overall coordination of emergency relief assistance as set out in the Addis Ababa Declaration on humanitarian issues. The Government requested the United Nations to coordinate all relief assistance to populations in the conflict-affected areas.

Three, the United Nations will endeavour to review its overall relief operations in Sudan, including its office in Nairobi, with a view to enhancing overall operational coherence and effectiveness. The United Nations will also take the necessary measures to ensure that information is made available in a timely fashion to the Government of Sudan.

Four, the Government of Sudan will endeavour to streamline relevant governmental bodies and to review its coordination mechanism with a view to ensuring that emergency issues can be expeditiously addressed and resolved.

Five, the Government of Sudan commits itself to provide the United Nations with access to all populations in need, wherever they may be, and to expedite procedures for the prompt and effective distribution of relief assistance within the framework of its sovereignty. The Government of Sudan offered the use of 21 corridors for the prompt delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance by air as well as by land and river.

Six, the Government of Sudan recognizes the useful role of non-governmental organizations in addressing humanitarian needs in Sudan. The Government will intensify its efforts to facilitate the necessary procedures to expedite the entry, travel and work of the non-governmental organizations undertaken with full observance of national policies and laws.

Seven, agreement was reached on the need for support by the United Nations and the intergovernmental community to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees from neighbouring countries to Sudan.

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

Eight, the Government of Sudan and the United Nations urged that special attention be given to protecting minors caught up in conflict situations and unaccompanied minor refugees in neighbouring countries. Both pledged to make every effort to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reunion of unaccompanied minors with their families.

Nine, both parties agreed that a concerted effort, including the effective mobilization of resources, must be made to support the transition from relief to recovery, rehabilitation and development in Sudan, in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 46/182.

Ten, the United Nations will appoint a Special Emissary for follow-up with the Government and to ensure that timely assistance is provided to all those in need throughout the country.

The signing by the Government of Sudan of this agreement with the United Nations reaffirms Sudan's commitment to the provisions of international humanitarian law and to the fundamental right of people to receive humanitarian assistance. Distortion of facts and information about Sudan on this issue are largely based on ignorance and misinformation. It should be pointed out that non-governmental organizations, despite the good work some of them do, and perhaps because of it, and because of their freedom of movement, consider all Governments as a nuisance and view the United Nations and its agencies as fat and slow-moving bureaucracies. Some of the non-governmental organizations are difficult to please. Sudan, however, has cooperated and continues to cooperate with a number of them and recognizes the useful role they play. They are currently one of the principal actors in the Sudan Emergency Operation and Operation Life Line Sudan. They are represented, along with the Government, the United Nations and donors, in the supervisory

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

group of Operation Life Line Sudan, which oversees the performance of relief operations. They are also represented on the Relief Allocation Committee, which decides on distribution of assistance. At the regional level they are members of relief committees that assess needs and allocate assistance. In all States affected, an international non-governmental organization is entrusted with coordination of all relief operations. The Government intends to continue that cooperation with international and national non-governmental organizations.

The relationship between emergency relief, development and the root causes of disasters must be addressed. Poverty and the whole North-South relationship must be examined. In rendering humanitarian assistance to a country affected the United Nations and the international community must bear in mind the close relationship between emergency, rehabilitation and development. Emergency assistance should be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development. The funding in this respect remains an important issue, and the roles of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund are vital. The resources for the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) must also be available, and in this connection we do agree with the United Nations Secretary-General when he mentioned in his report (A/47/595) that the situation of the CERF must be rectified and pledges paid in full in order to maintain the viability of the Fund. We believe that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund should be utilized primarily for the activities reflected in the consolidated appeal.

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

In conclusion, humanitarian assistance remains a complex issue. We reiterate that a very careful balance must be struck between the principle of sovereignty and the imperative to help human beings in desperate need in different parts of the world. The Government of Sudan is committed to carrying out its responsibilities to its citizens in need and is ready to cooperate with the international community in carrying out that task. We expect from the international community more understanding and support and less unwarranted criticism.

The PRESIDENT: The next speaker is the representative of Barbados, who will speak on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 12 States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations: Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, the Republic of Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, Barbados, on agenda item 37, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations".

Last year, through resolution 46/182, the General Assembly adopted a comprehensive framework for the coordination of United Nations efforts in providing humanitarian emergency assistance. The countries of the Caribbean Community have studied with great interest the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/47/595, which details the progress made in the implementation of that mandate. We welcome the creation of the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs, under the competent leadership of Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, whose briefings on the subject during

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this session have given us much food for thought. We offer him our full support in the difficult and challenging task he faces.

It is a cruel irony that even as cold-war fears of global conflagration recede, the panorama of human suffering and tragedy should so dramatically intensify. Conflicts within countries, the mass displacement of populations, drought and famine, environmental degradation, poverty and economic deprivation increasingly threaten the lives of millions around the world. Natural disasters are occurring with alarming frequency and intensity. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the humanitarian agenda is now a central concern of several of the Committees of the Assembly as well as the Security Council.

The vital role of the United Nations in the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance to populations in need is indisputable, and the current efforts to coordinate and enhance the United Nations capacity for effective delivery of such assistance deserve our support. We note that the mechanisms called for in resolution 46/182, namely the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the process of consolidated appeals, are already in place and functioning adequately. With respect to the Fund, current experience would suggest that an early review of its operations by the General Assembly is in order to allow for a more rapid response to emergencies and greater flexibility in the utilization of the Fund.

The notable increase in number and scope of the humanitarian emergencies confronting the United Nations has seriously strained the Organization's capacity to respond. The States members of the Caribbean Community are persuaded of the need for strengthened financial and human resources to enable the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to coordinate an effective United

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Nations response to disasters and emergencies. We also share the Secretary-General's concern to ensure that the necessary conditions of security are provided for humanitarian activities and personnel in operations of increasing complexity and danger.

The countries of the Caribbean Community have already addressed the question of refugees and displaced persons in our region, particularly the long-suffering peoples of the sister Caribbean state of Haiti, in another forum of the Assembly. I wish therefore to turn my attention to the subject of natural disasters. This is an area of priority concern for CARICOM countries, whose geography and geology have left us exposed to the hazards of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and hurricanes, the latter occurring of late with an unprecedented ferocity.

Every year, natural disasters take an estimated toll of hundreds of thousands of lives and cause some $40 billion in devastation to the economies of countries, mostly in the developing world. In the Greater Caribbean Basin, between 1960 and 1989, hurricanes killed some 28,000 people, disrupted the lives of 6 million and caused $16 billion in property damage. For the countries of the Caribbean Community, hurricanes are an annual nightmare; they have repeatedly inflicted major infrastructural damage and caused crippling setbacks to our economic development efforts. Again this year the nightmare revisited, in the form of hurricane Andrew, whose sustained winds of over 150 miles per hour caused several deaths, left more than 1,600 homeless and inflicted property damage in excess of $300 million on one of our member States, the Bahamas.

The countries of the Caribbean Community continue to be appreciative of the support and solidarity offered by the international community to those of

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our members afflicted by natural disasters. Our accumulated experience over the years has, however, clearly demonstrated the importance of strengthening our indigenous capacity in disaster prevention, mitigation, management and response. During the last decade, the former Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator played an important role in facilitating our efforts towards the development of appropriate mechanisms for disaster preparedness and response at the national level, through the Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project. That project played a significant part in raising public and institutional awareness of disaster-management issues and of the preventative measures required at the national level.

In 1988 and 1989, CARICOM Governments worked together on an ad hoc emergency basis to provide rapid response to the humanitarian needs of member territories devastated by hurricanes Gilbert and Hugo. Drawing upon that experience, a decision was taken by CARICOM Heads of Government to create a permanent regional mechanism to provide for an automatic, immediate and coordinated response to such situations in future. In September 1991, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) became operational.

In order to ensure that CDERA is fully equipped to fulfil its important functions in the shortest possible time, CARICOM Governments have secured the invaluable assistance of the United Nations Development Programme in the mounting of a Disaster Emergency Management Systems Project in the participating States of the region. Over the next three years, in 14 participating States, new information technologies and revised operational systems and procedures will be introduced to enhance the resource-management capabilities of our respective Ministries responsible for health, consumer

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affairs and public works. Working in close collaboration with national disaster coordination focal points in each participating State, CDERA will have at its disposal essential resource-allocation data and information, which will allow for the immediate deployment of skilled personnel and of materials to respond to the emergency medical, food and shelter needs of any member country affected by a natural disaster.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

The innovative design of the project, with its emphasis on institution and capacity-building, will help to create in our Ministries and Departments a cadre of nearly 400 technicians fully familiar with the new technologies and techniques of resource management and trained to network with their counterparts throughout the region for the most effective delivery of emergency-disaster assistance. Ultimately, the upgraded human and technological skills resulting from this project will not only serve the region's disaster-response capacity but also have the net effect of modernizing and strengthening the wider spectrum of Caribbean public-sector management capabilities.

If I have elaborated at length on the CARICOM experience with regard to disaster prevention, preparedness and response, it is because our Governments believe that our current efforts in this regard could serve as a useful model for other regions. Furthermore, we are convinced that one of the priority objectives of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be the development of a decentralized response strategy based on a systematic upgrading of regional, subregional and national capacity, particularly in developing countries, to manage emergency situations requiring humanitarian assistance.

Strong and timely international support will naturally continue to be an essential element in achieving this goal. Coordination of United Nations humanitarian activities at the field level will be a vital complement to this exercise, and our countries look forward to the results of the review of this aspect of coordination promised in paragraph 72 of the Secretary-General's report.

In this regard, we suggest that the early conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between the restructured Department of Humanitarian Affairs-UNDRO

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

and the Caribbean Disaster Response Agency would enhance our collaboration and put an end to the dislocation in communication experienced during the restructuring of the United Nations humanitarian administration. We also see the need for a regional presence of the Department's disaster-relief arm - in particular, to provide a functional link between the Caribbean Disaster Response Agency (CDRA) and the non-participating States of the Caribbean.

The expansion of the mandate of CDRA as the regional clearing-house for disaster-related information could also be an important means of reaching other members of the threatened region that do not participate in the Agency, and we look forward to support for this proposal from the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The overall promotion of the objectives of the Decade within our region will rely heavily on active involvement of the United Nations Development Programme and other relevant United Nations agencies.

Two major lacunae in the Caribbean Community's response capabilities continue to be our deficiencies in the area of search and rescue and the need for enhanced early-warning systems for tropical cyclones - in particular, to accommodate the regional capacity to access real-time data on threatening and actual events. We intend to work closely with the international community to remedy these deficiencies.

A further initiative within the Caribbean Community to enhance our institutional capacity in natural-disaster management has been the establishment of a Disaster Studies Unit at the University of the West Indies. We are confident that the Unit will receive the full support of the relevant United Nations agencies during its formative stage, and we are certain that it will constitute a valuable resource for all Member States.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

The members of the Caribbean Community consider it to be of fundamental importance that the questions of rehabilitation and development be firmly integrated into humanitarian-assistance policy. Our region, as well as others in the developing world, abound with examples of the transition from relief to rehabilitation being inadequately provided for, and we therefore welcome the acceptance, in the Secretary-General's report, of this important linkage.

There is also a continuing and urgent need for the international community to address the underlying causes of the most serious humanitarian crises that face us today. No long-term solution is possible except in the context of measures to reverse the economic and social inequities of the present world order, which continue to condemn so many of the world's population to underdevelopment, poverty and famine.

The challenges that lie ahead for the United Nations in the humanitarian field are enormous. United Nations operations have attempted to strike a careful balance between concepts of sovereignty and non-intervention, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the responsibility of Governments towards their peoples and the duty of the international community to assist in relieving the extreme suffering of populations. Concepts of human-rights protection and international humanitarian law have evolved considerably in the post-cold-war era. The members of the Caribbean Community look forward to the constructive advancement of this seminal dialogue.

Mr. HAJNOCZI (Austria): In Austria's view, resolution 46/182 entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations" was an achievement by several standards. First, it demonstrated how the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly can work together in a very fruitful and productive way. Secondly,

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

it struck a very delicate balance between the rightful exercise of national sovereignty, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, solidarity with people in situations of extreme distress. Thirdly, resolution 46/182 created an organizational structure that set up the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and it provides the United Nations system with several valuable tools with which to address natural and complex emergencies, thus enhancing greatly the capability of the United Nations in the field of disaster relief.

Austria would like to pay tribute to Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his valour and excellence at the helm of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO), and we wish to assure him and his efficient staff of our cooperation and support. We are grateful for his efforts to keep in touch with interested delegations. In the months since he assumed the post of United Nations Relief Coordinator complex emergencies have mushroomed, requiring ever-increasing humanitarian-relief assistance from the United Nations. My delegation appreciates the tremendous workload and difficulties resulting from these emergencies at a time when the new Department was in the very process of being set up.

Austria welcomes the administrative arrangements made so far by the Emergency Relief Coordinator with regard to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs-UNDRO in New York and Geneva and would like to underline the great importance that it attaches to very smooth cooperation between Geneva and New York. We support the allocation of responsibilities and the delineation of tasks between the two Offices, as described in the report of the Secretary-General. We expect this functional delineation to be further fine-tuned as more experience is accumulated.

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

Austria welcomes the establishment and functioning of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and the creation of the Inter-Agency Working Group intended to address inter-Agency operational problems that do not require the direct involvement of Heads of Agencies. We hope that these structures, as well as the Inter-Agency Support Unit, will provide the flexibility of coordination that is needed in the area of complex emergencies. The very nature of complex emergencies does not allow for rigid structures and preconceived ideas. On the contrary, it requires a constant reassessment of available means and modalities and the freedom to choose the modalities and the approach that seems most promising in any given emergency.

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

Resolution 46/182 has also created a cash-flow mechanism, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. Austria has contributed to that Fund and we were pleased to hear earlier this year that it had become operational and that the first disbursements had been made. We attach, of course, greatest importance to following financial and accounting procedures in such a way as to ensure the Fund's maintenance on a sound financial basis. On the other hand, the primary reason for creating the Central Emergency Revolving Fund was to make possible a quicker response by the United Nations to emergencies. In view of this raison d'être of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund my delegation is in favour of greater flexibility in its utilization.

The initiatives taken by the Emergency Relief Coordinator with a view to improving the coordination at the country level are very timely. They are in consonance with the Secretary-General's ideas on a unified United Nations presence at the country level as well as with current intergovernmental negotiations on the revitalization of the United Nations role in enhancing international development cooperation. Improved coordination in the field should also help with the transition between relief, reconstruction and development, which is essential for long-term success. Austria therefore looks forward to the outcome of the review of coordination of humanitarian assistance at the country level to be undertaken by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its operational partners, and to be submitted for appropriate action to the Governing Council of UNDP and to the Economic and Social Council at their 1993 sessions.

Sadly enough, complex emergencies abound. The current trend clearly is to expect the United Nations to continue to be actively involved in complex

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

emergencies in the years to come. This will increasingly entail the deployment of staff to undertake relief operations where there is a real risk to life. Hence, as is pertinently pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, special attention would need to be given by the United Nations to recruitment policy, security procedures, training for relief personnel in risk management, and development of a comprehensive system of communication, evacuation and insurance coverage. At the same time, possibilities for the progressive development of humanitarian law - for example, with a view to drawing up legal norms for the protection of humanitarian convoys and personnel in conflict situations - should be explored. Austria looks forward to discussing these issues further with all our partners.

The new Department for Humanitarian Affairs has now been in existence for some seven months. This is hardly sufficient time to allow for an in-depth appraisal of its achievements or shortcomings. Yet even a preliminary review reveals a number of elements that might warrant sustained governmental interest in the months to come. As I have said already, the Economic and Social Council and UNDP will have to look into the possibilities for enhanced coordination at the field level. The balance to be struck between security of relief personnel and solidarity with people in need must be considered carefully. There may be scope for further enhancement of coordination between the various humanitarian actors within existing mandates. And a case may be made for examining the mandates of humanitarian agencies to determine whether there are gaps or overlaps, and identifying options for improvement.

As we ponder these questions it may make sense to model our proceedings on the genesis of resolution 46/182 and to give closer attention to some of these issues during next year's session of the Economic and Social Council.

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

Incidentally, next year the Council will meet in Geneva, which will make it possible to bring to bear on our deliberations the operational expertise existing in that city. The coordination of the humanitarian emergency response activities of the United Nations system may be a very worthwhile topic for the coordination segment of the Council. Its session could then lay the groundwork for a more in-depth assessment of the implementation of resolution 46/182 during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

In the meantime, and by way of conclusion, the General Assembly at this session should welcome the progress achieved in the cooperation between, on the one hand, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator and, on the other, the operational agencies, as well as with the international financial institutions. The General Assembly at this session should also provide the Department of Humanitarian Affairs both in Geneva and in New York with the human and administrative resources necessary to carry out its mandate. Furthermore, it should call upon Member States and private organizations to continue to provide the United Nations system with the resources necessary to enable it to deliver relief assistance in a timely way and in a volume commensurate with the unprecedented number and increasing complexity of humanitarian emergencies. This we owe to the spirit of resolution 46/182. We also owe it to the millions of human beings whose only chance for relief is the humanitarian action of the United Nations.

AGENDA ITEM 8 (continued)

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: FOURTH REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE (A/47/250/Add.3)

The PRESIDENT: Before calling on the next speaker in the debate on agenda item 37, I should like to take up, with the concurrence of the Assembly, the first item scheduled for this afternoon, that is, the consideration of the fourth report of the General Committee (A/47/250/Add.3), which concerns requests submitted by the Russian Federation, Nicaragua and Afghanistan.

Paragraph 1 of the report concerns the request by the Russian Federation for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional item.

The General Committee decided to recommend that the item, entitled "The situation of human rights in Estonia and Latvia", should be included in the agenda of the current session. May I take it that the General Assembly decides that this additional item should be included in its agenda?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The General Committee also decided to recommend to the Assembly that this item should be allocated to the Third Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The Chairman of the Third Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

Next, I should like to draw members' attention to paragraph 2 of the fourth report of the General Committee (A/47/250/Add.3), which concerns a request by Nicaragua for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional item entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters".

(The President)

The General Committee decided to recommend that the item should be included in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in its agenda an additional item entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters"?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The General Committee also decided to recommend that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts that recommendation of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: May I also take it that the item should be considered with priority because of its urgent character?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Paragraph 3 of the fourth report of the General Committee concerns the request by Afghanistan for the reallocation to plenary meeting of agenda item 141, entitled "Emergency international assistance for the reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan".

Members will recall that at its 3rd plenary meeting held on 18 September 1992, the General Assembly allocated agenda item 141 to the Second Committee.

In paragraph 3 of its report, the General Committee recommends that agenda item 141 should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

Since the request now before the Assembly involves reconsideration of the decision taken at our 3rd plenary meeting on the allocation of this item, a decision is required under rule 81 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to reconsider the question of the allocation of agenda item 141.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: In the light of the decision just taken, we may now proceed to consider the recommendation of the General Committee. According to

(The President)

that recommendation, agenda item 141 should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation?

It was so decided.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members about some additions to our programme of work next week.

On Tuesday, 24 November, in the morning, as already announced, the Assembly will consider agenda item 39, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

In the afternoon of Tuesday, the Assembly will take up agenda item 141, entitled "Emergency international assistance for the reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan".

On Monday, 30 November, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up, in addition to agenda item 27, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", agenda item 150, entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters".

I should also like to inform members that the fifth report of the General Committee will be considered on Monday, 23 November, in the afternoon, as the first item.

AGENDA ITEM 37 (continued)

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/595)

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh): I am very happy to have this opportunity to speak on this important agenda item on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. Let me express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his useful report on the item.

The increasing role of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian assistance was underscored when the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182 last year by consensus. It provides a comprehensive framework for the provision of humanitarian relief assistance by the United Nations in terms both of the guiding principles and of the modalities for relief assistance, including coordination. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs was established in April 1992 in accordance with that resolution. We are indeed very happy to see Mr. Jan Eliasson, a distinguished diplomat, appointed Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. During the short period of the Department's existence Mr. Eliasson has made his mark in charting a course in a new and rather delicate field, and that course we hope and feel strongly will stand the test of time.

The strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the area of humanitarian assistance, in the opinion of my delegation, is a very timely development. This is so because there has been a dramatic increase in the number of cases of civil and ethnic strife. The report of the Secretary-General rightly points out that the provision of humanitarian assistance has the potential to create a positive environment for improving

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

security conditions, thus providing an opportunity to address the underlying political problems. Appropriate and timely response to emergency situations is crucial in assisting victims, de-fusing tension and creating a climate conducive to the resolution of political problems. Member States have therefore rightly recognized that the strengthening of humanitarian assistance is one of the principal responsibilities of the United Nations.

Humanitarian diplomacy, as we know it and as it has been conceptualized and is being carried out by the Department, forms an important part of preventive diplomacy. There is an interrelationship between humanitarian activities and peacemaking and peace-keeping. The provision of humanitarian assistance has indeed become a vital part of the United Nations peacemaking and peace-keeping endeavours. The importance of this link has also been stressed in the Secretary-General's report, "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277). My delegation therefore hopes that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will work in close cooperation with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs in formulating United Nations humanitarian response to complex emergencies.

Humanitarian assistance will, we hope, strive to address the root causes of emergencies and ensure transition from relief to rehabilitation and long-term sustainable development programmes. To achieve this goal, there is a need for close cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies, particularly the United Nations Development Programme, and international financial institutions.

The personnel carrying out these humanitarian efforts have recently been subjected to difficult security conditions. Humanitarian relief personnel in former Yugoslavia and in Somalia have been facing grave problems in this

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

regard. Some of them have even lost their lives in carrying out their mission. The international community should adopt appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief works. Bangladesh will support all efforts in that direction.

In the short seven-month period of its existence the Department has played a very important role in providing early warning and mobilizing resources for effective and timely humanitarian responses to natural and man-made emergencies in many parts of the world.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for sending Mr. Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, as his Special Representative to both Bangladesh and Myanmar to assist in the repatriation of Myanmar refugees. The presence of some 265,000 Myanmar refugees in my country has imposed a serious economic burden and an early resolution of the problem is essential to end the human misery.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

Bangladesh has taken up the issue with Myanmar in order to resolve it peacefully in the spirit of friendship and good-neighbourliness. We are committed to the safe and voluntary return of the refugees. Bangladesh believes that a United Nations presence would act as a critical catalyst for ensuring voluntary repatriation.

So far a small number of Myanmar refugees has returned to Myanmar on a voluntary basis. The negotiations between the two countries are ongoing. Bilaterally, we have been impressing upon Myanmar that it should strengthen guarantees to generate confidence among the refugees in order to ensure safe repatriation. We are hopeful that our talks with Myanmar will lead to safe and voluntary repatriation of the Myanmar refugees.

My delegation would like to commend the work of the office of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva in the field of natural disaster relief and assistance. The United Nations can help disaster-prone countries in developing disaster-mitigation programmes and early-warning systems.

There is a need to enhance the indigenous capacity of Member States to face natural disasters effectively. The joint Department of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Disaster Management Training Programme for disaster-prone developing countries is a positive step in this direction. We also welcome the initiatives of the Department to improve disaster-preparedness by setting up a Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. Bangladesh would be happy to share its own experience in handling natural disasters with disaster-prone countries or United Nations agencies.

The coordination of United Nations emergency relief assistance would be the more effective for being harmonized with national relief efforts by taking

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

into account their needs and priorities. This could be ensured through proper integration of United Nations relief operations with relief operations mounted by national authorities.

We are pleased that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund established pursuant to resolution 46/182 became operational in May 1992 on reaching its target of $50 million in pledges. With the increasing demand on the Fund owing to the proliferation of crisis situations and the delay in replenishment of the Fund, we feel that there is a need to review the size of the Fund.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that in providing humanitarian assistance the United Nations should be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. We believe that the United Nations is the best-equipped body to play the central role in providing leadership and coordinating the international community's humanitarian efforts to face emergencies, whether man-made or natural.

Bangladesh will extend all support and cooperation to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance within the United Nations system.

Mr. SREENIVASAN (India): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate, at this plenary meeting of the General Assembly today, in the debate on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. It is useful to recall that the Charter of the United Nations itself states that one of the purposes of the Organization is to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character. India, as a founding Member of the United Nations, has consistently attached high priority to this aspect of the work of the Organization.

(Mr. Sreenivasan, India)

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs was established to ensure fulfilment of the objectives expressed in resolution 46/182, adopted at last year's session of the General Assembly, which called for effective coordination and strengthening of United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance and specifically proposed the appointment of a high-level official to deal with the humanitarian emergency situations in various parts of the world in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

Barely one year has passed since establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and the successes achieved by it in this short span confirm the wisdom of the measures suggested in last year's resolution 46/182.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on this subject contained in document A/47/595. We are particularly gratified by the actions taken by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to deal with the humanitarian situations of considerable proportions in southern Africa, Afghanistan, Kenya, the Horn of Africa, Yugoslavia and Iraq, and the success achieved by it in many of these areas. My delegation would like to record its deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his leadership of this important Department.

Resolution 46/182 laid down a set of important guidelines for the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. These guidelines were in conformity with the basic principles of the Charter, including the principle of the sovereignty of the State. In our view, the most important of these guidelines were that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality; that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected; that humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the

(Mr. Sreenivasan, India)

affected country and, in principle, on the basis of an appeal by the affected country; and that the affected State must have the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory. We once again reaffirm our unwavering support for these basic principles of humanitarian assistance, and are confident that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will also continue to observe them in its future work as humanitarian relief operations assume increasing importance and grow in complexity.

We are also pleased to observe from the report of the Secretary-General that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been able to accomplish many of the tasks envisaged in last year's resolution 46/182. We encourage the Department to continue its endeavours in connection with the establishment of the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. We welcome the information that the Directory of Emergency Response Officers and the Directory of International Search and Rescue teams are already in existence. We look forward to the establishment of the other parts of the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities, and particularly the Register of Stockpiles of Disaster Relief Items and the Register of Disaster Management Expertise. These Registers will promote the smoother and more effective functioning of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in providing humanitarian relief to the needy segments of populations in an expeditious and cost-effective manner.

We further welcome the efforts made by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in strengthening the Disaster Management Training Programme of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP by expanding the programme's scope to cover 70 disaster-prone developing countries. The report of the Secretary-General provides useful information on this activity.

(Mr. Sreenivasan, India)

Among the various activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs aimed at putting the work relating to humanitarian relief operations on a sustainable basis, we note and encourage its efforts to establish a register of stand-by capacity which includes resources available both inside and outside the United Nations system and which would be available in emergencies.

(Mr. Sreenivasan, India)

We attach particular importance to the involvement of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the early stages of the planning of humanitarian assistance and in the designing of relief programmes since this will assist in a smooth transition from short-term relief measures to rehabilitation and long-term development, as emphasized in resolution 46/182. This successful relationship between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, on the one hand, and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, on the other, could pave the way for mitigation of economic difficulties under different circumstances, such as those envisaged in Article 50 of the Charter.

The working relationships being developed with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Economic and Social Development to synchronize relief and development efforts at the field level constitute yet another effective step to achieve transition from relief to development. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee called for in the resolution, which has now become operational, will assist in the formulation of policy issues and in tackling the important, but difficult questions of coordination and cooperation.

The Secretary-General's report has also indicated several other steps which have been undertaken by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to make its work more effective. These include modalities of assistance to internally displaced persons, the new consultative mechanism proposed by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) ad hoc working group on early warning regarding new flows of refugees and displaced persons, which will begin to function in 1993 as a subsidiary organ to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the discussions on the use, on request, of military and civil defence assistance in sudden natural disasters and the ongoing discussions

(Mr. Sreenivasan, India)

between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peace-keeping Operations along with other bodies of the United Nations system to examine the serious problem of mining in certain countries. We look forward to a further report from the Secretary-General on these activities.

Another problem which has assumed alarming proportions during the last year, in the conduct of humanitarian relief programmes, has been the security of personnel engaged in such programmes. Members of the United Nations have received increasing reports of casualties of personnel involved in providing humanitarian relief assistance and growing threats to their lives. We agree with the observation made in the Secretary-General's report that the international community has the obligation to provide humanitarian assistance in some instances, even before security arrangements can be put in place.

It has been necessary in some instances, for example in Somalia and Yugoslavia, for United Nations peace-keeping personnel to provide protection to the humanitarian relief supplies and convoys. We have supported these efforts in the Security Council since we are of the view that it is of the utmost importance for the United Nations and, in fact, the entire international community to persist in their efforts in alleviating circumstances which threaten thousands of lives of adults and children, even at the risk of the lives of people involved in providing such relief. It is, of course, a truism that the security of the personnel involved in such lofty endeavours is important and, therefore, wherever necessary and called for protection should be provided to such personnel in accordance with the established principles.

The ongoing cooperation between the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is, therefore,

(Mr. Sreenivasan, India)

realistic. We also agree with the views expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on humanitarian assistance as well as in his report "An Agenda for Peace" that the provision of humanitarian assistance strengthens the efforts towards peace-keeping and peacemaking. We would like to emphasize at this stage that, while all the efforts for the provision of humanitarian assistance for peace-keeping and peacemaking contribute towards the single goal of establishing and maintaining international peace and security and, equally importantly, re-establish the process of economic development and growth in affected countries, these remain distinct activities, each one equally important.

Resolution 46/182 also established an important role for the non-governmental organizations in association with the United Nations to provide a quick response to humanitarian tragedies as well as in the process of planning of such response. The report in document A/47/595 indicates several steps taken by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in using the capacities available within the non-governmental organizations in planning and conducting such programmes of humanitarian assistance, from the stage of early warning to the stage of delivery of such assistance. It is important that all activities regarding humanitarian assistance be conducted in accordance with the principles of transparency, neutrality and impartiality.

My delegation, while welcoming the accomplishments of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs during this past year, would once again like to reaffirm the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States and the importance of providing humanitarian assistance with the consent of the affected country. Under no circumstances should the humanitarian assistance become a pretext for intervening in the internal affairs of another country.

(Mr. Sreenivasan, India)

We are indeed happy to note that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has given paramountcy to this principle in dealing with the humanitarian situations in the world. My delegation has had many occasions to cooperate with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the past, and we have responded to the needs for humanitarian assistance anywhere in the world with sympathy and assistance even beyond our capacity. We will continue the work with similar objectives in the future also.

Mr. CHEN Jian (China): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/47/595 submitted to the current session of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations". Our thanks also go to Mr. Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his introductory statement. We would also like now to offer our observations on issues dealt with under the item.

Resolution 46/182, adopted last year, laid the groundwork for the enhanced role of the United Nations in the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance, making it possible for the United Nations to respond to major complex disasters in a more prompt and coordinated manner. In this connection, we wish to welcome the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. We also appreciate the effective work undertaken by Mr. Eliasson in the implementation of resolution 46/182. We would like to reassure him of our active support and full cooperation in discharging the responsibilities entrusted to him by the General Assembly.

We note with pleasure that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has, within a short period of several months, undertaken a great deal of work. In New York, the Department coordinates policies of humanitarian emergency

(Mr. Chen Jian, China)

assistance and formulates, in consultation with other United Nations agencies, the concrete policies, strategies and plans to address each major emergency. The Geneva Office is responsible for specific emergency relief activities.

(Mr. Chen Jian, China)

We welcome the establishment in Geneva of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which in our opinion will prove to be essential in ensuring the effective and coordinated role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in organizing the emergency assistance activities of the United Nations. With mechanisms for emergency assistance well in place, relief funds become the decisive factor in the provision of humanitarian emergency assistance.

We are pleased to note that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund established pursuant to resolution 46/182 has raised $50 million and has provided affected people in Somalia and other countries with emergency assistance. We support these activities and hope that the portion of the fund that has been used will be replenished in time for assistance to be delivered to affected people in similar disaster situations in the future.

We also express our appreciation to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for launching six consolidated appeals in the past six months. We believe that with the Department's work getting onto the right track, humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations will play a more active role.

It is imperative that in discharging its responsibilities the Department of Humanitarian Affairs keep in mind the guiding principles stipulated in the annex to resolution 46/182: that United Nations humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality; that humanitarian emergency economic and relief assistance must be provided in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter; that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States must be fully respected; and that preconditions should not be attached to such assistance. Furthermore, humanitarian assistance should not be affected in

(Mr. Chen Jian, China)

any way by differences among States in political system or ideology. We are of the view also that in providing emergency assistance, consent should be obtained from recipient countries; these should also be in charge of the coordination of external assistance of this kind.

The United Nations will be playing an increasingly important role in providing humanitarian assistance. The Chinese delegation supports the United Nations in all its endeavours towards the strengthening of humanitarian emergency assistance.

We are concerned by the increasing neglect of assistance to areas affected by natural disasters. We hold that the international community should provide timely assistance to the victims of all disasters, be they natural or man-made. As natural disasters generally affect larger areas and involve more victims, thus inflicting heavier losses, the need for humanitarian assistance in such cases is similarly greater.

We believe that emergency assistance is closely linked to the reconstruction, rehabilitation and development of affected areas. Therefore, emergency assistance should be combined with plans for the rehabilitation and long-term development of affected areas. We support United Nations endeavours in this regard.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the role of the United Nations in coordinating the humanitarian assistance to affected countries by the international community is very important and unique. The United Nations should ensure that relief assistance reach affected populations promptly and smoothly and with full respect for the guiding principles set out in the annex to resolution 46/142.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand): New Zealand strongly supported the creation of the mechanisms set out in resolution 46/182. They were devised for the key purpose of enhancing and strengthening the ability of the United Nations system to deliver humanitarian assistance to the needy. We see them as helping sustain the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations. Like others, we are deeply saddened and frustrated by the suffering of hundreds of thousands of ordinary human beings who are destitute, starving, sick or homeless, not because of anything they have done, but because of what has been done to them by famine, flood, earthquake or war. The United Nations has long recognized a responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance, but systemic inadequacies have affected its capacity to deliver timely relief.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs under the guidance of the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Eliasson, has now been in operation for seven months. One of the principal tools with which he has been provided, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, has been operational since May. The changes we have all sought to secure through the new machinery are far-reaching and are entitled to a bedding-in period. Some self-adjustment and fine-tuning are only to be expected on the basis of experience. But a provisional stocktaking now might, however, usefully focus on what more Member States can do to help in this transition period.

We have been given plenty of material for this in the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/595). That report meets the requirement that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs be accountable to the membership, like any other part of the system. And at the same time it improves our understanding of the scope of the humanitarian crisis today.

Tragedy after tragedy now unfolds in the world. The challenge to the United Nations community is daunting, but it must be met. Like others,

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

New Zealand has sought to play its part. We have made our commitment to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund; we have responded to needs arising from the ravages in the cyclone-prone region of the small island communities in our near North. We have also joined in broad international efforts to deal with the massive, complex humanitarian situations, for example in the Horn of Africa and in areas of Iraq, Afghanistan and Europe.

It may be fairly said that these last tested the new humanitarian arrangements which we are considering here today even before the ink approving them was dry. This year has witnessed extraordinary pressures on the system's capacity. The deterioration in conditions under which assistance has had to be delivered is a truly distressing feature. More than ever before, flexibility and pragmatism are needed if the United Nations system is to be able to respond appropriately. At the same time, the spirit and word of the enabling agreement - resolution 46/182 - must be honoured.

If the demands on the United Nations humanitarian-assistance capability have grown, so too have the expectations of the international community, the media and the citizens of many countries. Where expectations, however misplaced, have not been met, many have been quick to criticize, often unfairly. In Somalia in particular, and in the former Yugoslavia, United Nations humanitarian action has been labelled as slow, late, vacillating and inefficient. Such criticism, if levelled repeatedly and without foundation, will over time only undermine the credibility and stature of the United Nations itself. The United Nations system and its Member States have it in their hands to better ensure that those who criticize do so with the facts in hand and with a clearer understanding of the realities that exist on the ground.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

New Zealand believes two requirements need to be addressed. First, a positive and forward-looking information effort needs to be put in place to illustrate United Nations capabilities and to help our constituencies get a better understanding of the framework in which our Organization operates. The commitment to respect for national sovereignty and all that that implies also needs to be explained, along with the recognition that the prime responsibility for a population's needs, including the responsibility to provide access to humanitarian assistance, rests with national Governments. So too must the commitment and obligations of the international community to assist people in need be well understood. An information programme does not require costly hand-outs and pre-packaged productions for mass consumption. It means sensitizing the international media and others through exposure and transparency. It means Governments playing their part in keeping the people properly informed.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

Secondly, the quality of dialogue between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and Member States is of the greatest importance. The establishment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is intended to bring the views of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and of the agencies together. This vital coordination is not an end in itself, but an instrument for the effective delivery of assistance. New Zealand welcomes, moreover, the informal briefing arrangements that have been instituted to keep countries informed of coordination activities and constraints. We hope that this can be expanded to include detailed information on ongoing operations and about strategic and financial considerations. A balance needs of course to be struck. Information overload must be avoided. But in this way the Member States will be better equipped to match their responses to emergent needs. For their part, Member States have, New Zealand believes, an obligation to ensure that we each present consistent views in the agencies, particularly within their governing bodies, to avoid giving rise to confusion about operational priorities.

It is widely acknowledged on many sides that there are clear links between emergency relief and sustainable development. They form a continuum. Countries represented on the governing councils of the various agencies must ensure the consistency of approach that recognizes this. The development agencies themselves must similarly adjust. There is indeed, we believe, evidence of this. The recent decision of the World Bank to grant assistance to Somalia is evidence of change in the traditional approach.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs can only be as effective as the tools we give it. The Emergency Revolving Fund, acting as a cash-flow mechanism to cover the up-front costs of new operations, is an innovative instrument. New Zealand pledged and paid $250,000 to the Fund earlier this

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

year, but it is disconcerting to learn that, while the $50-million target was met in May, only about 15 per cent of the United Nations membership have made contributions or pledges. Of those, not all have yet been fulfilled. A task next year will be to review the Fund's operations, including the adequacy of the level and the financial regulations governing it. Replenishment through repayment is the ground rule. At this stage, New Zealand believes that work might best concentrate on monitoring the Fund's use and on ascertaining how, without detriment to that ground rule, its governance and the requirements of the agencies that might draw on it could better mesh together.

Finally, I want to comment on a matter of great concern to all of us - the safety of all personnel involved in humanitarian operations. The Nordic spokesman addressed this matter earlier this afternoon in his statement. It is a sad fact that providing the basic means of survival through international relief is having to take place far too often under gunfire, amidst warring factions, under conditions of siege.

The United Nations peace-keeping effort has become inextricably linked with its humanitarian effort. We are pleased that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is creating close coordination with the departments that deal with peace-keeping. There is a real need for this. It is a complex issue. Relief workers have died in conflict, as have soldiers tasked to protect them. Attacks on humanitarian workers and their protectors constitute in several respects attacks on the foundations of humanitarian law. This factor cannot be ignored. The New Zealand delegation supports the Department of Humanitarian Affairs efforts to clarify the operational conditions under which United Nations relief should go ahead. We will join in the work of devising measures to minimize risks and to protect personnel as well as to bring their attackers to book. As the Secretary-General's report notes, there

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

may indeed be a need to endorse new standards of recruitment, different sorts of training, security procedures and so on.

I have focused here on the consequences of involvement in complex humanitarian situations. New Zealand is not unmindful, however, of the other work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, including its disaster-relief component, the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, and the special coordinating units. We commend the work being done on matters such as data collection and dissemination, early warning, preparedness and mitigation programmes, and in the area of training. We note with interest the initiative for a task force to consider the issue of de-mining. On the practice of designating lead agencies, New Zealand considers the practice to be a useful one. We are impressed by the efforts of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in this regard in the former Yugoslavia, where New Zealand, for one, has worked closely and directly with that Agency in meeting our commitments to accept Bosnian refugees. Where a lead agency has been designated, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has of course a responsibility to remain closely engaged in a monitoring and advisory capacity.

It is obviously not easy to operate a Department in two locations. Separation has made more difficult the task of sorting out the appropriate division of labour to ensure that the essential tasks of policy coordination and humanitarian diplomacy and those of coordination of operational action are properly covered. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs will be greatly assisted if it can be assured both of a sound financial base for its operations and of the staffing resource to match its task. We expect the Department of Humanitarian Affairs

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

to develop a leadership role and to exercise its mandate in a responsible and effective way. Much commendable evidence does suggest it has begun to do so.

Mr. AKŞIN (Turkey): It is unfortunately becoming clearer that, in the unsettled post-cold-war era, humanitarian assistance is going to be one of the most challenging issues. The hopes that were raised by the recent political changes have dissipated all too soon. Now Europe has joined those regions of the world where humanity has been suffering and crying out for relief.

Last year, the major success of the General Assembly was the setting up of the new machinery to coordinate activities connected with the United Nations humanitarian assistance. We applauded the efforts of Mr. Eliasson as he undertook his daunting task with great energy. His difficult task is one in which he faces increasing demands from new emergencies while the old emergencies continue. In this case, the United Nations has acted expeditiously in setting up the right framework. However, the new unit needs all the help it can get, financial and technical as well as political, if it is to carry out its duties with the desired effectiveness.

Recent man-made and natural disasters have acquired major proportions, and no country can be expected to cope with such situations single-handedly. Succeeding disasters compete with one another for financial and material resources. The disasters that are claiming our attention call for comprehensive responses, which only the United Nations system is equipped to provide. We have supported the establishment of a Central Emergency Revolving Fund because we consider it to be very important. Pledging conferences have not always produced the desired results. The report of the Secretary-General, which is a lucid presentation of the situation, points to the time-lag between

(Mr. Akşin, Turkey)

the pledges that are made and actual contributions. Another issue is that often pledges that are made are conditional, which constrains and delays humanitarian assistance. We agree with the Secretary-General that maximum flexibility be allowed by donors and that pledges not be earmarked wherever possible.

An effective healing process to benefit the stricken calls for adequate financial resources. The international community as well as the stricken community itself must make every effort to provide the necessary assistance and to provide it in a timely manner. We are confident that the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs will elaborate the ways and means for continuing to focus and channel assistance to stricken countries in the aftermath of disasters. The complementarity between disaster-relief efforts and development programmes, especially in the case of protracted emergencies, should be properly ensured. Efforts must be made not to lose sight of the development needs of the country even while addressing the direct consequences of the disaster.

Recent emergency situations have also created waves of refugees and displaced persons. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the worst cases of human suffering. The United Nations humanitarian assistance system has made valiant efforts to provide assistance to all victims without regard to politics. We support this position. It is our strong wish that wherever the United Nations flag is unfurled, all sides in a conflict respect the basic rules in order to allow assistance to be delivered unhindered. However, whether in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in Somalia, events have shown that we are far from this objective of total respect and support for humanitarian assistance efforts. We must pursue our efforts to secure improvements in this critical area.

(Mr. Akşin, Turkey)

We understand very well this point made in the report:

"Regardless of circumstances, the international community has the obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed, including in conflict situations, whether or not there is a political solution, and, in some instances, even before security arrangements can be put into place." (A/47/595, para. 5)

In such circumstances, we must be guided not just by the need to respect basic humanitarian conventions and international law but also by the moral obligation not to stand idly by while thousands are suffering on account of political considerations.

Resolution 46/182, which is the basic framework for the provision of humanitarian relief assistance, urges States in proximity to emergencies to facilitate the transit of humanitarian assistance. It also calls on the United Nations to obtain access for operational organizations to emergency areas and alleviation through such modalities as relief corridors and zones of tranquillity. The present situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Somalia call for the active participation of the United Nations in such a manner. The flow of relief supplies and essential items to the beleaguered people of both countries must not be allowed to be disrupted, as it is literally a matter of life and death.

The world looks to the United Nations with hope and high expectations. As the Organization is exploring ways to develop peace-keeping and peacemaking within the framework of "An Agenda for Peace" the United Nations has a duty to live up to these expectations.

Mr. SACIRBEY (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of my delegation and the delegation of the Republic of Croatia in the debate on agenda item 37, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations".

First, I should like to welcome the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson on his appointment as the first Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on this item.

We are encouraged by the effort to enhance coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance within the United Nations system, improve the effectiveness and timeliness of the United Nations response to emergencies and address the management of humanitarian assistance at the policy and country levels.

The report of the Secretary-General demonstrates that there is an increasing number of acute emergencies in various parts of the world. In the past decade there have been emergency situations in the Horn of Africa, in Afghanistan and along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, in Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nagorny-Karabakh, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan and the former Yugoslavia.

We wish to emphasize that in emergency situations the provision of humanitarian assistance depends not only on the amount of aid that is collected for distribution but also on the effective distribution of that aid to the people whose lives depend on it. It is critical that all efforts be made to ensure that aid is delivered despite all obstacles.

We believe that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an immediate test case for emergency humanitarian assistance in other regions. Of course,

(Mr. Sacirbey, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

each humanitarian emergency has its own causes and should be approached selectively. Those causes must be addressed in order to deal with the humanitarian needs of the people.

We submit that addressing the causes of the emergency should be a part of every humanitarian relief plan, even if it requires addressing political considerations. Ultimately, political and humanitarian considerations should be interconnected, both being directed to resolving the problem and improving the quality of life for people.

We are grateful to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as a principal coordinator and to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and all others that have assisted in providing humanitarian assistance. As much as we appreciate this vital assistance, which has helped many people under extreme circumstances, we are not embarrassed to ask for more assistance. We are not shy because it is clear that the international community has in fact not done enough to address the causes of the humanitarian emergency, that is, to stop the aggression and the aggressor's policy of creating a humanitarian nightmare.

Without concerted efforts to stop the aggression, the crisis continues to grow. New refugees and demands on relief efforts are created. The humanitarian crisis generates instability and threatens to explode beyond even its currently massive proportions.

The humanitarian emergency in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia has steadily increased in magnitude, to the point that it threatens the peace and security of the region. There is a clear need for balance in facilitating relief for the people who are threatened. Croatia is enormously burdened with up to a million refugees, including approximately half a million from Bosnia

(Mr. Sacirbey, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

and Herzegovina, while many other countries are accepting only a handful. We submit that this burden should be more equally shared and, most directly, that the international community should facilitate the means for refugees to stay within our borders, but well fed, clothed and sheltered.

At the same time, there is an immediate need to create safe-haven zones in Bosnia and Herzegovina where people can be fed without being murdered. It is important to ensure their safety where they are now, but also to bring immediate humanitarian assistance to them. Safe-haven zones allow for effective delivery of humanitarian aid to people, and at the same time they prevent and limit the acts of aggression and "ethnic cleansing" that are committed against them. Safe-haven zones are not to be permanent enclaves or ghettos of suffering and resentment, but the most feasible option for dealing with an impending catastrophe.

We are reminded that Security Council resolution 770 (1992) provides that humanitarian aid should be delivered by whatever means are necessary and can be delivered by United Nations agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations and by Member States directly in coordination with the United Nations. We want to see greater action consistent with the spirit of resolution 770 (1992) as we see the prospect of 400,000 people perishing from exposure, hunger and disease. At the same time, there are numerous resolutions that will have no meaning if they are not combined with vigorous enforcement and implementation.

(Mr. Sacirbey, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Full and prompt coordination of relief efforts is more critical than ever, and this is where we see the role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Such efforts should be coordinated with the sovereign Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We submit that such coordination with the receiving country is essential for successful humanitarian efforts and not to further the causes of the aggression and tragedy.

We look to efforts to provide humanitarian emergency assistance, in conjunction with efforts to stop and deter further aggression, as the process by which refugees can ultimately return home and by which the sad consequences of "ethnic cleansing" can be reversed to the greatest extent possible.

In conclusion, our experience is a dire test case for humanitarian emergency assistance. The humanitarian crises in Somalia, Iraq, Sudan and the drought-affected countries of southern Africa demonstrate that these matters require effective and timely action by the international community wherever they occur.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): As the Secretary-General points out in his report on the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system (A/47/595), this has been a year that has seen both positive developments and a host of new problems. For several years now, the question of how to strengthen the ability of the Organization to coordinate humanitarian assistance has been a matter of great concern to us all. Certainly, the initiatives the Secretary-General has so promptly taken following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 46/182 are timely responses to the sudden increase in the number of emergencies that have erupted in the aftermath of the cold war. I refer, for example, to the creation of the Department of

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Humanitarian Affairs, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

I should like, however, to confine my comments today to several issues of urgency that have broad implications and are likely to have a major impact on the basic framework within which the international community provides humanitarian assistance.

It was agreed in resolution 46/182, adopted last year, that respect for the sovereignty of a State requires that its consent be obtained before humanitarian assistance is delivered. Each State is also deemed primarily responsible for providing relief to its own population. The adoption of this principle of respect for sovereignty at the urging of certain countries reflects how politically important it is.

However, a serious unanticipated problem emerges, namely that of access to victims of emergencies. The increasing frequency of civil strife and warfare have plunged not a few countries into a nightmare that has brought them to the brink of anarchy. Their ability to exercise sovereignty has diminished to such an extent that they are unable to function and ensure safe and extensive access to victims of emergencies within their boundaries. Delivery of humanitarian assistance to those desperately in need thus becomes very dangerous. This is the case in Somalia, where the international community faces one of the most difficult and challenging of such situations. In coming years, however, the United Nations will have to continue to provide humanitarian assistance even under these conditions if it is to live up to the expectations of the international community, which are growing.

It is encouraging to note that there is increasing awareness and acceptance of the need to provide access to victims of emergencies. The

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Countries of the Horn of Africa, held in Addis Ababa in April of this year, which has come to be referred to as the Humanitarian Summit Meeting, endorsed the principle that such access must be provided. We must accordingly redouble our efforts to find a way out of the present dilemma, especially in those critical cases where there is no longer any authority exercising true sovereignty. As the United Nations has been entrusted with near universal authority to protect and promote humanitarian causes, it must take a more active leadership role in developing strategies to meet this formidable challenge. And it must be free to implement those strategies vigorously, while at the same time taking care to violate neither the letter nor the spirit of the principles laid out in the resolution adopted last year.

United Nations agencies involved in humanitarian assistance face another serious dilemma in the risks their staff members run in engaging in activities in the field. The recent report from Kenya that a convoy of trucks loaded with food and humanitarian supplies was ambushed and looted by several gangs en route to Iscia Bioda, and that there were many casualties, is appalling, if it is accurate. In Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere, aid workers are now facing unprecedented threats to their lives and safety.

Several attempts have been undertaken to address this burning problem both at Headquarters and in the field, thus deepening and reinforcing the interrelationship between the political, security, and humanitarian aspects of United Nations activities. Political efforts to reach an understanding with warring parties and devise security arrangements such as safe corridors, safe zones or areas of tranquillity should continue to be pursued. It is also encouraging that attempts are being made to recruit and train local policemen

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or guards to provide protection for deliveries of humanitarian supplies. The Security Council has recently increased its involvement in this area, developing a number of modalities aimed at ensuring safe and effective delivery. Although limited in scope, such efforts may help to enhance the safety of aid workers in the field.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

The international community nevertheless must do more to elaborate frameworks within which the security concerns that beset aid workers may be addressed. It is necessary to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian laws, and in this connection, it is encouraging to note in paragraph 77 of the report that there is a possibility of progressive development of such legislation. I also note with interest the suggestion in paragraph 76 that institutional arrangements should be improved within the United Nations system in such areas as recruitment, training, medical care, communications systems and security. I strongly agree that existing arrangements should be reviewed in the light of the increasingly dangerous conditions under which humanitarian operations in the field are now taking place. And I hasten to add that the consent of the State for access to those in need has a strong bearing on the safety of aid workers.

Increasingly, the United Nations is being called upon to carry out peace-keeping, peacemaking and humanitarian activities in combination - for example, in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, and soon, probably, Mozambique. Some have denounced what they call the militarization of United Nations humanitarian assistance, which they believe violates the spirit of humanitarian activities. This is not my delegation's view of such assistance. It continues to have the highest regard for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and those other non-governmental organizations that are providing humanitarian assistance.

The activities of both the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Yugoslavia and the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) are illustrative of an era in which the international community has come to expect that there will have to be protection when humanitarian assistance is

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

delivered to the victims of emergencies; they should therefore be understood as efforts to respond to difficult situations. The question of where and when peace-keeping forces should be mobilized in order to provide protection for humanitarian assistance should be considered on a case-by-case basis. In short, all parties concerned should exercise the maximum restraint and avoid becoming bogged down in pointless polemics on this issue; flexibility is what is needed.

In this regard, the recent appointment of Dr. Johnston of the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) as coordinator for humanitarian activities of non-governmental organizations in Somalia is most welcome. He has recognized the importance of providing protection to those who are engaged in humanitarian assistance. And I am certain that he will serve as a catalyst in the important work of enhancing cooperation and understanding among aid workers in the field, both governmental and non-governmental.

Resolution 46/182 stipulates that when a consolidated appeal for emergency humanitarian assistance is launched it is not only the emergency itself that should be addressed, but the larger, underlying need for rehabilitation and development, on the ground that such assistance is what has been called a continuum of all phases of development. The root causes of disasters and emergencies must be dealt with if their recurrence is to be avoided. No durable solutions are possible, therefore, if they fail to treat the issue of development. At the same time, given the emergency nature of an appeal, development can only be taken into consideration to a limited extent, and attention must be paid to the availability of donor-country resources.

Having said this, however, I must add that my delegation considers it important that development agencies be involved in United Nations humanitarian

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

activities at the earliest possible stage. For this reason, it is very pleased that the World Bank now participates actively in the development aspects of humanitarian activities relating to Somalia and the drought in southern Africa.

The demand for emergency aid around the world continues to grow. The response of the international community to the consolidated appeals, however, has apparently fallen short of expectations, with the result that the gap between financial requirements and available resources is widening. Some humanitarian assistance programmes are now in jeopardy. In this connection, while it characterizes its experience with the consolidated inter-agency appeals as on the whole very positive, the report points to several problems that have impeded or delayed smooth implementation of assistance. Japan believes strongly that the key here is burden-sharing by those parties directly and indirectly concerned, by which I mean the country experiencing the crisis, regional organizations and Member States of the United Nations.

Since the inception of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs consolidated inter-agency appeals have been launched in six cases: the Drought Emergency in Southern Africa (DESA), Afghanistan, Kenya, the Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA), the former Yugoslavia and the plan of action for Iraq. In each instance my Government has responded positively. Its contributions to date total $190 million, to which may now be added additional emergency aid for a food airlift and other operations to assist afflicted persons in Somalia. As a member of the international community, Japan will continue to provide support for humanitarian assistance activities in the future.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator, whose post was established in accordance with resolution 46/182, has a truly awesome task, and it must be

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carried out in the face of a growing demand for enhanced coordination of humanitarian activities. He has not been granted a clear mandate to take command of United Nations implementation agencies, his authority deriving directly or indirectly from that of the Secretary-General. However, the resolution does provide resources and tools that the Coordinator has not yet used in carrying out his general mandate. I also believe that his work will make greater progress when the remainder of his assignments, including those enumerated in the report, are completed.

At the same time, I must say that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been overloaded with work. It has been stretched to the limit of both its human and its financial resources as a result of the many disasters and emergencies that have suddenly occurred around the world.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

My delegation therefore fully supports the idea of a study to determine how human and financial resources might be redeployed to the Department within the existing framework of the United Nations, for it is our view that this is a matter of the highest priority.

In conclusion, the task of providing humanitarian relief assistance is both one of the most difficult and one of the most important the international community faces today, and it is a task that is only likely to grow. As a result, strengthening the coordination of such assistance will continue to be a major challenge, not only for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs but for us all. My Government intends to cooperate to the fullest with all efforts to meet that challenge.

Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): The growing United Nations involvement in the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance has emerged from the need to ensure a comprehensive approach to the solution of global problems on the basis of a balanced concern for their political, economic, social and humanitarian aspects. The effective realization of the leading role of the United Nations in this matter, which stems from its ability to coordinate intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations under its auspices and to ensure that the efforts of various contributors complement one another, would unquestionably help to enhance its authority in the world community still further.

There is general agreement on the direct connection between humanitarian assistance and peacemaking efforts. This has become particularly clear in recent months, inter alia, as a result of the markedly increased attention being devoted to humanitarian issues by the Security Council. The delegation of the Russian Federation is convinced that a suitable reflection of that

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

interrelationship in concrete actions taken by the United Nations will help both to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization's peacemaking and peace-keeping efforts and to obtain greater results from emergency humanitarian assistance.

Less than a year has elapsed since the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 46/182, which laid down a comprehensive basis for more active United Nations participation in coordinating collective efforts for the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance. As is well known, the resolution contains guiding principles and concrete machinery for providing such assistance.

The delegation of the Russian Federation regards resolution 46/182 as one of the major decisions to draw upon the comparative advantages of the United Nations. The past year has shown how timely its adoption was. The practical implementation of the resolution's provisions is helping to alleviate the suffering of millions of people who are sorely in need of emergency humanitarian assistance.

As we have seen on many occasions, and as the Secretary-General details in his report (A/47/595), the organizational and administrative steps taken have in many cases enabled the world community to respond in an effective and coordinated manner to a host of emergency situations. In this connection we should like to emphasize that in recent months the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, headed by Mr. Jan Eliasson, has performed significant work, and the Russian delegation values the results, on the whole, very highly. We should like to assure the Department and Under-Secretary-General Eliasson that our country will support and cooperate in its activities.

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that, in our opinion, many of the ideas set forth in the Secretary-General's report deserve serious consideration at this session of the General Assembly. We are prepared to cooperate actively and constructively with all delegations with a view to reaching agreement on the issues raised in the report, particularly with regard to measures to be taken to ensure the safety and protection of staff taking part in the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance and to ways and means for further developing international humanitarian law as applied to humanitarian assistance.

Mr. MWAUNGULU (Malawi): The Malawi delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General under agenda item 37, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations". Malawi applauds the work the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has performed in the short space of seven months since its establishment by General Assembly resolution 46/182. The leadership of Mr. Jan Eliasson has a great deal to do with that achievement, but much remains to be done in order to strengthen the Department.

The post-cold-war situation continues to define and dictate emergency humanitarian-assistance needs over a wide area of the globe, but most acutely in Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in many parts of Africa. The report of the Secretary-General graphically outlines the increasingly extensive and unexpected demands that have been and are being made for urgent emergency humanitarian assistance, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs risks being completely swamped by these daunting challenges. In the view of the Malawi delegation, there is, therefore, no doubt that an urgent need exists to review and augment the financial resources that should be available

(Mr. Mwaungulu, Malawi)

and at the disposal of the Department. The financial resources for the Central Emergency Revolving Fund need to be increased above the $50 million ceiling. Malawi is appealing to the donor community to be forthcoming in response to this perceptible need.

Malawi, like its sister countries in southern Africa, is experiencing a very severe drought. The reports I have received from my capital indicate that this drought is now being aggravated by the non-delivery of pledges for humanitarian assistance to purchase food, principally maize, as well as non-food items such as drugs and equipment for bore-hole drilling and rehabilitation. It is critical that such humanitarian assistance should be ensured, for people must have food to take them through the rainy season until the next crop harvest in March-April next year. We pray to God for good rains to enable the people to plant and to see a good crop grow and possibly to reap a good harvest next year.

(Mr. Mwaungulu, Malawi)

Malawi welcomes the outcome of the United Nations-Southern Africa Development Community Appeal for the Drought Emergency in Southern Africa (DESA). My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on successfully mounting that event in Geneva. I have had the opportunity to call on Mr. Eliasson to convey to him my Government's encouragement of his Department's follow-up work to deal with the drought situation in Malawi and the southern Africa region as a whole. Indeed, my delegation would like to support strongly the appeal that the Secretary-General makes in his report, calling on the donor community to translate their pledges for the drought emergency in southern Africa into actual disbursements.

My delegation would like also to stress one more important point on donor pledges that is made in the Secretary-General's report. There is no doubt at all that pledges to meet humanitarian assistance needs in non-food areas are just as critical and just as urgent. Malawi appeals to the donor community not to neglect the very real and interrelated needs in this area.

Also, Malawi holds the view that where pledges are earmarked, they should not lead to misinterpretations of impartiality. The relative gravity and urgency of humanitarian needs are the same everywhere. Therefore, my delegation fully supports the call the Secretary-General makes in his report for the donor community not to earmark all their pledges and to give the Department of Humanitarian Affairs the element of flexibility needed to execute its mandate under resolution 46/182 without its hands being tied. The Malawi delegation would like once again to appeal to the donor community to give more in unearmarked pledges to meet urgent emergency humanitarian assistance needs.

(Mr. Mwaungulu, Malawi)

Malawi is hosting more than 1 million refugees from the sister country of Mozambique, a number that represents about 13 per cent of the Malawi population. The refugee settlements are concentrated in the Nsanje, Chikwawa, Mulanje, Thyolo, Mangochi and Mwanza districts in the southern region of the country; Ntcheu, Dedza and Mchinji in the central region; and Nkhata Bay in the northern region. In the Nsanje district, the refugee population is larger than the local population.

My Government welcomes with a great deal of happiness the general peace agreement for Mozambique, which was signed in Rome on 4 October 1992 between the Government of the Republic of Mozambique and RENAMO. Malawi has been involved in the peace process in Mozambique for many years now. Malawi welcomes and looks forward to the presence that the United Nations has promptly established on the ground in Mozambique to implement the protocols of the peace agreement from the date it took effect, on 15 October 1992.

Malawi welcomes wholeheartedly the prioritization that the United Nations has given, through the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, to the provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Mozambique, which must include the very large number of expected returnees from Malawi. Malawi is happy to make its contribution on the return of the refugees through the Tripartite Commission, which consists of the Malawi and Mozambique Governments and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, and through its own high-level institutional instrument, the Commission for Disaster Relief and Emergency Preparedness.

My Government considers the United Nations commitment to meet humanitarian assistance needs in Mozambique to be a major peace-building measure, which should lead to more and more refugees from Malawi returning to

(Mr. Mwaungulu, Malawi)

their villages and towns in Mozambique and, above all, to contributing to the reconstruction and development of their beautiful country.

In conclusion, the Malawi delegation would like to mention the fact that the presence of such a large number of refugees in the country has created significant stress on its economy and all its sectoral infrastructures, with a consequential adverse impact on its overall development programme. It is urgent that Malawi correct this situation. To do so, it must rely on the continuing assistance of the United Nations system and that of the donor community. It is therefore important for Malawi that the United Nations efforts to meet humanitarian assistance needs in Mozambique in the wake of the general peace agreement should succeed. Indeed, in so far as the returnees are concerned, my Government has always been ready to help in every way possible, constrained only by the availability of financial resources.

Mr. GHAFOORZAI (Afghanistan): Allow me to express the gratitude of the people and the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan for the efforts put forward by the Secretary-General and Mr. Jan Eliasson, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their concern and tireless work and bringing the dire humanitarian and economic need in Afghanistan to light, and for launching an appeal for aid to our war-torn country.

My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his informative report contained in document A/47/595. We welcome in particular the inclusion of paragraph 52, which deals with the humanitarian situation in my country, Afghanistan.

We note with encouragement the progress made within the framework of General Assembly resolution 46/182, entitled "Strengthening of the

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations", and the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. We welcome the efforts under way to provide emergency relief assistance to southern Africa, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia and Iraq, but we would point with dismay to the lack of sufficient response thus far to the Secretary-General's consolidated inter-agency appeal for emergency assistance for Afghanistan, launched on 5 June 1992.

The delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan believes that there is a direct link between peace and prosperity, which are among the main objectives of the United Nations Charter, and emergency humanitarian assistance to countries in need.

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

In unforeseen situations, when a nation or region is faced with a sudden man-made or natural disaster, there is the possibility of instability and an increase in the level of the initial catastrophe. The link between humanitarian assistance and peacemaking is clearly addressed in the Secretary-General's report entitled "An Agenda for Peace", which is contained in document A/47/277. We also fully support the following statement in the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations":

> "In the case of complex emergencies, humanitarian assistance is essential but should be complemented by measures to address the root causes of such emergencies through peacemaking and peace-building." (A/47/595, para. 79)

The Islamic State of Afghanistan is the inheritor of a country in unprecedented crisis. To illustrate the situation of Afghanistan I shall quote from the Secretary-General's appeal of 5 June 1992:

> "Few countries in history have suffered to the extent Afghanistan has over the past 14 years. Aside from the physical destruction, which was often nothing short of cataclysmic, the results of the war include over a million people killed, over 2 million disabled, nearly 6 million refugees in neighbouring countries, and 2 million internally displaced persons."

The new Government of Afghanistan faces the task of rebuilding a country with an economic and social infrastructure that is totally destroyed. Not only are there 6 million refugees, whose repatriation is an immense task in its own right, but millions of land mines greet them as they return to their homes. This inflates the death toll and adds to the already-crippling number of disabled people. Mother nature too has taken her toll on the Afghan people. During the first week of September 1992 a flash flood of

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

unprecedented scale in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush mountain range caused enormous loss of life and property.

With the situation in Afghanistan as it is, my delegation believes that the Islamic State of Afghanistan should be a prime candidate for United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance. While we appreciate and are very grateful for the assistance that has been given to our country by various Member States and agencies, we note with disappointment the lack of adequate support for the consolidated appeal of the Secretary-General and for Mr. Jan Eliasson's appeal of 1 November 1992 entitled "Winter Emergency Needs of Afghanistan".

The Secretary-General's appeal of 5 June was for $179.7 million. More than five months has elapsed, yet only $59 million has been donated in cash and in-kind contributions. Mr. Jan Eliasson has made an urgent request for a winter emergency fund of $17.6 million, which would be used for

> "prepositioning of food and heating fuel, the procurement of shelter and blankets, and the provision of essential health services to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan throughout the winter months".

This winter, which it is predicted will be extremely harsh, is fast descending on Afghanistan, but the life-saving assistance is slow to come. However, we have received bilateral assistance, and the respective donors have been thanked and their humanitarian help praised by our people and our Government.

The disappointment of the Islamic State of Afghanistan with the international community's response to the consolidated appeal of the Secretary-General has been echoed by the Group of 77 in relation to the agenda item under consideration today. In the same context, the Ambassador of

(Mr. Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan)

Malaysia, while commending the efforts launched as part of the humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, noted the exception of the case of Afghanistan. The omission of the name of Afghanistan from the statement made today on behalf of the European Community does not seem to be in line with the responsive, positive and sympathetic attitude of the States members of the Community to the plight and suffering of the Afghan nation and its dire need for emergency assistance. We are grateful to those who have voiced their concern about the lack of sufficient assistance for Afghanistan, and we renew our appeal to this world body for fast and effective assistance for a country that has no way out of its current misery without the help of other Member States and various United Nations agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations and international financial organizations.

In conclusion, I should like once again to express the appreciation of the people and Government of Afghanistan to all those who have helped or are helping us, and I urge those who have not so far come forward to do so. We firmly believe that delay in providing international assistance to Afghanistan would jeopardize economic reconstruction and that this would have a direct and negative impact on the achievement of the objective of viable political stability.

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly has thus concluded its debate on agenda item 37. Action on the draft resolution to be submitted under this item will be taken at a later date, to be announced in the Journal.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members of a change in the programme of work for next week.

(The President)

On the morning of Tuesday, 24 November, as has already been announced, the Assembly will consider agenda item 39, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". On the same morning the Assembly will take up agenda item 141, "Emergency international assistance for the reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan".

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.